



THE FOOD JOURNAL OF LEWIS & CLARK: RECIPES FOR AN EXPEDITION

Reviewed by Jennifer Pattison Rumford

Mary Gunderson, Dennis Dahlin (Illustrator)
History Cooks, Yankton South Dakota, 2003, 174 p.
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I cooked something that was over 200 years old and my family ate it.

Mary Gunderson's book, *The Food Journal of Lewis & Clark*, supplied the recipe. Gunderson believes that we can bring history alive through cooking – that understanding the past requires understanding what the people of the past prepared and ate. She uses the term that she has actually registered as her own: "paleocuisineology." That's a mouthful.

But it is a good mouthful, if you buy her cookbook and try some of the recipes. You could take these recipes on the trail, if you are roughing it in the field, but they work equally well in a nicely stocked kitchen.

In her cookbook, she looks at the food of Lewis and Clark expedition. Food was important to the survival and success of the mission, and Meriwether Lewis and William Clark wrote about food in their journals nearly every day.

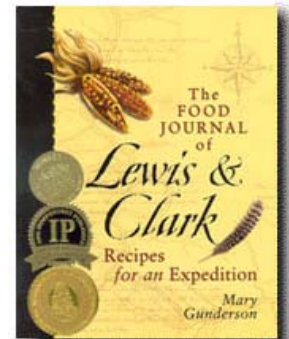
Gunderson has separated the book into sections that start, as did the Lewis and Clark expedition, with Thomas Jefferson. While in office, much of the food served in the President's House (as the White House was officially called during the Jefferson Presidency) was brought up from his Virginia plantation. Because no sensible Virginian would go without them, this section of recipes starts with Virginia-Style Beaten Biscuits. Throughout the book, some of the recipes are based on what Gunderson has researched and discovered about what people ate, but others are from historic documents. One of those is Monticello Muffins, from a recipe written by Jefferson.

Chapter 2 details the instructions Lewis received regarding the expedition, and how he provisioned for it. The cost of provisions is presented in 1803 dollars (\$38,722.35) and in 2002 dollars (\$614,640.48). Part of that purchase included 193 pounds of tin canisters of Portable Soup, which was a standard provision for Britain's Royal Navy and travelers everywhere.

Gunderson supplies the basic recipe for Portable Soup, which is a gelatinous product made from oxtails that would later have water added to it, much like today's bouillon cubes. For the daring among us, she explains exactly how to store the soup, and suggests that for authentic 1803 flavor, it can be stored at room temperature.

Some of the recipes are from the period, and would have been known to Lewis and Clark. Pepperpot is a meat-based chili-type dish that was made by African American women and sold by the bowl from portable brazier-heated pots on street corners. Except for the addition of potatoes, this is a very similar meal to one sold in the plazas of San Antonio by Spanish American women known as the Chili Queens, which was featured on the Hidden Kitchens radio show.

Chapters 3-10 deal with the expedition itself, and include recipes that use ingredients local to the areas they passed through. Not only can one learn



how to roast buffalo (with sage), one can also make Fort Mandan Pemmican, which is based on recipes supplied by the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara tribal members. Recipes like the one for Pemmican, suggest using local wild berries (Juneberries, serviceberries, buffalo berries) or since most of us do not have access to such berries, how to fall back on fresh, frozen, or canned blueberries.

Although some of the recipe ingredients might be difficult to find on grocery store shelves, other items have come into their own. Buffalo is becoming more common in meat markets, because of the leanness of the meat. The Roasted Jerusalem Artichoke recipe uses a tuber vegetable from the sunflower family that is native to the Great Plains. Lewis wrote in 1805 that Sacagawea "busied herself in sercing fo the wild artichokes...". Jerusalem Artichokes are often available from specialty grocers for use in salads and stir-fry meals. Gunderson also includes an appendix with sources for many of the items that might be hard to find.

Because Lewis felt considerably inconvenienced by the lack of salt, the expedition members spent a good deal of their time on the Pacific coast boiling sea water to collect twelve gallons of salt, which would last until they reached their cached supplies on the Missouri (p. 118).

Sometimes a specialty cookbook is limited by the nature of the topic. However, the original expedition covered a lot of miles geographically and seasons, and the food that was available to the

people of the expedition varies accordingly. This gives the cookbook a broader base of possible recipes, including many fish dishes from the coastal areas, meat, poultry, vegetables, and even desserts.

In September 1808, Clark drank hot chocolate to soothe a bad stomach. "I felt my Self very unwell and derved a little Chocolate which Mr. [Robert] McClellan gave us, prepared of which I drank about a pint and found great relief ..." (p. 139). Who wouldn't feel better drinking hot chocolate? I certainly do. A recipe is included that is based on unsweetened chocolate.

Chapter 11 follows the travelers home, and introduces the food that would have been served at homecoming celebrations. The menu for the homecoming would make an excellent menu for any party. Although we've never done it, because of our own geographical separation, perhaps the staff of PE should have a party...

The Food Journal is well-designed, with a good looking cover, and is one book that makes good use of ragged-edged paper that many book designers long to use. Dennis Dahlin's illustrations and maps further enhance the book.

The book is a fine addition to anyone's shelf, and is available from bookstores, as well as the author's web site History Cooks. If purchased directly from the author, she will autograph it specifically for you or the cook of your choice.

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